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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Test Development, Technology, and Logistical Support for the North Carolina Testing and Accountability Program 2014-15 and 2015-16

Section I: Purpose of the Request for Proposal

The Division of Accountability Services, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) is noting the continuation of services provided by the Center for Urban Affairs and Community Services, North Carolina State University (NCSU-TOPS). In addition to the Scope of Work specified in the 2012-13 and 2013-14 contract, NCSU-TOPS agrees to provide additional services as indicated in this document. These services include providing research design and data collection, psychometric technical assistance and support, professional assistance and support, evaluation studies, logistical solutions and coordination assistance overlaid with the necessary technology to ensure efficiency in supporting and/or improving the (1) North Carolina Testing Program and the State Board of Education's (SBE) READY accountability program.

The major tasks and activities associated with the 2014-15 and 2015-16 scope-of-work are defined in detail in the section of this document, entitled, "Section III: Scope-of-Work." However, as an introduction to the organization of the work required to successfully implement the existing public school testing and accountability programs, the three major works areas are identified and listed below:

1. Test Development Services and Psychometric Technical Assistance and Support (60%);
2. Technical Assistance and Support, Programming Services, Logistical Solutions, Test Production and Layout, Warehousing and Materials Delivery, Online Testing Delivery and Hosting, and Archiving of Documents (32%); and
3. Research Design and Studies, Data Collection and Processing, Statistical Analyses, Report Generation, and Evaluation Support (8%);

Section II. Background

It is important that as a prospective contractor, the leadership and the staff be familiar with the current history and requirements of the North Carolina Testing Program, including recent modifications to the program and how public school educational testing programs, in general, are administered in this state.

2.1 Background of the North Carolina Testing Program

The North Carolina Testing Program was initiated in response to legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1977. Initially, legislation addressed the implementation of the Annual Testing Program, which consisted of norm-referenced testing at specified grades and a minimum competency test. Since that time, the program has been expanded and currently includes state and federally mandated end-of-grade curriculum-based tests in English language arts/reading and mathematics at grades 3-8, science at grades 5 and 8, and three end-of-course tests (Math I, English II, and Biology), the Grade 10 College and Career Readiness Assessment, the Grade 11 College and Career Readiness Assessment, the Beginning of Grade 3 English Language Arts/Reading, the Grade 3 Reading Portfolio, the Read to Achieve Alternate Test, and the North Carolina Final Exams. In addition, in response to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Act, North Carolina has instituted a system of alternate assessments for students with the most severe cognitive disabilities. These assessments are administered at the same grade levels and in the same content areas as the general assessments.

With the exception of the Grade 3 Portfolio, the Read to Achieve Alternate Test, and the NC Final Exams, all tests administered in the North Carolina Testing Program are included in the READY accountability program either in achievement, growth and/or participation measures. The READY accountability program was implemented in 2012-13, replacing the ABCs of Public Education which was in effect 1996-2012. With the READY accountability program, schools are held accountable for student achievement in the areas of English language arts/reading, mathematics, and science.

The current North Carolina Testing Program is administered also to meet the reporting needs of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (currently Title I Annual Measurable Objectives and Title III requirements related to students with limited English Proficiency) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

It is an expectation of this contract that the NCDPI staff, with the NCSU-TOPS staff, will continue to seek ways to minimize intrusive activities related to conducting studies or field test activities necessary to validate the state tests. The NCSU-TOPS operation along with the North Carolina Testing Program staff will continue to explore ways to implement a statewide testing program that is effective and efficient and meets the requirement for the agency's vision and State Board of Education's mandates for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Section III. Scope of North Carolina Testing Program for 2014-15 and 2015-16

3.1 Tests and Other Projects Required for 2014-15 and 2015-16

For the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years (to date), the North Carolina Testing Program includes the following operational general assessments, alternate assessments, and field tests or special studies.

- 1) English Language Arts (EOG-EOC)
 - a. Grades 3-8 EOG (multiple-choice)
 - b. English II EOC (multiple-choice/constructed response)
 - c. Grades 3-8, 10 and 11 NCEXTEND1 (performance-based multiple choice)
 - d. Beginning of Grade 3 (multiple-choice)
 - e. Grade 3 Reading Portfolio (multiple-choice)
 - f. Grade 3 Read to Achieve Alternate (multiple-choice)
- 2) Mathematics (EOG-EOC)
 - a. Grades 3-8 EOG (multiple-choice/gridded response grades 5-8)
 - b. High School Math I EOC (multiple-choice/gridded response)
 - c. Grades 3-8, 10 and 11 NCEXTEND1(performance-based multiple-choice)
- 3) Science (Operational)
 - a. Grades 5 and 8 EOG (multiple-choice/technology-enhanced)
 - b. Biology EOC (multiple-choice/technology-enhanced)
 - c. Grades 5, 8, 10 and 11 NCEXTEND1 (performance-based multiple-choice)
- 4) College and Career Readiness Alternates (per GS 115C-83.1)
 - a. College and Career Readiness Grade 11-Alternate (multiple-choice/writing prompt)
 - b. College and Career Readiness Grade 10-Alternate (multiple-choice/writing prompt)
- 5) North Carolina Final Exams
 - a. English I (multiple-choice)

- b. English III (multiple-choice)
- c. English IV (multiple-choice)
- d. Common Core Integrated Math III (2014-2015 only) (multiple-choice)
- e. Common Core Geometry (2014-2015 only) (multiple-choice)
- f. Common Core Algebra II (2014-2015 only) (multiple-choice)
- g. Pre-Calculus (multiple-choice)
- h. Discrete Math (multiple-choice)
- i. High School Math II (multiple-choice)
- j. High School Math III (multiple-choice)
- k. Advanced Functions in Modeling (multiple-choice)
- l. Earth/Environmental Science (multiple-choice)
- m. Physical Science (multiple-choice)
- n. Chemistry (multiple-choice)
- o. Physics (multiple-choice)
- p. World History (multiple-choice)
- q. Civics and Economics (multiple-choice)
- r. American History I (multiple-choice)
- s. American History II (multiple-choice)
- t. US History (2014-15 only) (multiple-choice)
- u. Science Grade 4 (multiple-choice)
- v. Science Grade 6 (multiple-choice)
- w. Science Grade 7 (multiple-choice)
- x. Social Studies Grade 4 (multiple-choice)
- y. Social Studies Grade 5 (multiple-choice)
- z. Social Studies Grade 6 (multiple-choice)
- aa. Social Studies Grade 7 (multiple-choice)
- bb. Social Studies Grade 8 (multiple-choice)

- 6) Special studies/field tests as approved by the NC State Board of Education
 - a. Study of transition to TestNav online delivery system for end-of-course tests to ensure feasibility and comparability

A copy of the chart depicting the proposed North Carolina Testing Program for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years will be posted on the NCDPI website at www.ncpublicschools.org in draft format at the end of May.

In addition to the operational assessments specified above, the Scope of Work includes the following projects:

- 1. Support professional development resources in NCEES (North Carolina Educator Effectiveness System) for professional development and NC FALCON
- 2. Support the Honors Portfolio submission, review, and report services
- 3. Develop and manage online distributed scoring system and conduct scoring for ten NC Final Exam Courses (piloting in 2013-14 and operational in 2014-15)
- 4. Develop and maintain online testing, including the transition from NCTest to TestNav
- 5. Develop classroom and benchmark item bank, including delivery support for the Schoolnet component of Home Base
- 6. Support SAS tools, including internal SAS Server and integration/report host project with SAS Business Intelligence tools

3.2 Non-Public Schools Testing Program.

In addition to students in public schools, the NCDPI provides testing materials to non-public and federal schools on an optional basis, as part of the North Carolina Testing Program. Non-public schools and federal schools may elect to participate in the North Carolina Testing Program, on a reasonable fee-basis, by registering with the North Carolina Non-Public Education Coordinator at NCSU-TOPS. For the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years all ordering, billing, and other communication between the non-public schools and the appropriate contractor will be for the specific test. The North Carolina Non-Public Education coordinator will provide the list of non-public schools that have completed the requisite training for test administration, and thus, authorize them to order testing materials whether through NCSU-TOPS or through an identified vendor which depends on the assessment requirements and specifications.

3.3 Community Colleges

In addition to providing services to non-public and federal schools, the NCDPI also provides services to the 58 community colleges operating under the state community college system. These services provide community colleges an opportunity to obtain training and technical support; to order test materials; and scanning, scoring, and reporting services for tests currently required of North Carolina students in order to receive a North Carolina high school diploma under the Adult High School Diploma Program including the end-of-course tests required to fulfill some high school course requirements. The test materials provided are to be the same as those used in the North Carolina Testing Program. Use of these test materials is restricted to specific conditions and testing windows that are monitored by NCSU-TOPS, as a condition of this contract with the NCDPI. All test materials are to be disseminated and collected timely to ensure that security of the materials is maintained. The tests that are eligible under this system are all operational end-of-course tests (as appropriate).

3.4 Administrative Structure

The day-to-day operations of the North Carolina Testing Program are managed and directed by the Division of Accountability Services' Test Development Section and Testing Policy and Operations Section. The Chief Consultant for Financial Services Purchasing Section and other personnel in the NCDPI will oversee the contractual processes. The State Board of Education and the Office of Purchasing and Contracts, Department of Administration, is responsible for approving contracts and contract amendments. The Director of Accountability Services will be the liaison between NCSU-TOPS and the financial management agencies of the NCDPI. NCDPI project oversight as the Project Manager for the NCSU-TOPS contract shall be the responsibility of the Chief Consultant for the Test Development Section who, with the Director of Accountability Services, shall work collaboratively with the project manager at NCSU-TOPS to ensure that the terms and conditions and other requirements of this contract are fully implemented. The Chief Consultant for the Test Development Section shall work with the other section chiefs/ lead consultants and the Director of Accountability Services and other areas of NCDPI to ensure that the requirements of this contract are fully implemented.

3.5 Enrollment

Currently there are 115 public school systems (Local Education Agencies-LEAs, a projected 151 public charter schools, approximately 7 special public schools, approximately 50 participating private schools, and 1 federal school in North Carolina. The total anticipated 2014-15 and 2015-16 public, non-public, and federal enrollments in the grades (grades 3-12) and subjects tested as part of the North Carolina Testing Program is approximately 1.6 million, with many students at certain grades taking more than one test.

3.6 Testing Calendar

North Carolina has a number of schools operating on non-traditional calendars, specifically a 4 x 4, 9-week, or semester block schedule. On a non-traditional calendar, students complete high school courses in one semester rather than on a yearlong basis. This has necessitated multiple testing dates for the various assessments and requires an ever increasing effort on the part of NCSU-TOPS to provide appropriate, quality assurance management, and leadership in providing the support, management, and security which will ensure successful implementation of the revised testing and accountability programs. A copy of the chart depicting the proposed North Carolina Testing Program for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years is located on the NCDPI website at www.ncpublicschools.org.

3.7 Maintaining Test Security

North Carolina tests and many of the supporting test documents are secure test materials. They may not be copied, reproduced, or discussed except with personnel that have a legitimate need pursuant to carrying out the terms of this contract. Access to the test materials shall be limited to personnel with a legitimate need. Personnel involved in the production, assembly, storage, shipping and analyses of tests and test data may not share the content of the test materials or the data except as directed by the staff of the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services. Personnel involved in working with secure test materials under the terms of this contract may not share documents with LEAs, schools, or other public or private entities including other governmental agencies or the media except as directed by the NCDPI project manager of this contract. All public requests for information, including the media and any individual other than district test coordinators, must be directed to the Chief Consultant for the Test Development Section Chief or the Director of Accountability Services. NCSU-TOPS, nor any of its employees, shall not respond to any requests for information or make any comments on the testing and accountability program.

Each year the NCSU-TOPS contract project manager shall develop a Test Security Agreement that is approved by the Chief Consultant for the Test Development Section Chief. The Test Security Agreement must (1) state that the person has read the Test Security Agreement and the North Carolina Testing Code of Ethics and that the person understands its content as well as the applicable sanctions in the event a violation of test security occurs. The Test Security Agreement must be read and signed by all employees (permanent and temporary). The contract project manager (NCSU-TOPS) must also provide all employees (permanent and temporary) with a copy of the North Carolina Testing Code of Ethics, which is referenced in the Test Security Agreement. All employees (permanent and temporary) should retain a copy of the signed test security agreement and the North Carolina Testing Code of Ethics. Each new employee (full time or temporary) hired to work on the project shall be required to read and sign the disclosure form at the time of employment after English language arts the North Carolina Testing Code of Ethics. The signed Test Security Agreements are to be kept on file by the NCSU-TOPS project manager for reference and access, if needed, by the NCDPI.

The facilities that are used to assemble, produce, develop, store, analyze and ship North Carolina tests shall have limited access for individuals not involved in the testing process. All visitors must enter through the front main entrance and be required to sign in. Every effort shall be made to ensure that visitors are escorted during their time in the facility and are not able to acquire access to secure test materials or data files at any stage of production and delivery. Visitors will be required to wear a badge which clearly identifies them as visitors. The public waiting area shall be clearly defined with signs that advise that visitors are not allowed beyond identified points. Physical barriers, to the extent possible and feasible, are encouraged to further define the visitors' waiting areas. The use of the facility for public meetings such as test reviews or advisory committee meetings shall be discouraged. At no time, will any person be admitted through an alternate entrance, such as the warehouse doors, or be permitted access to secure area without the presence of NCDPI staff or NCSU-TOPS staff. The warehouse bay area shall be secured at all times.

NCSU-TOPS shall account for all test materials received at all times. Personnel with access to secure North Carolina Test Materials shall not use their access to those materials for personal gain. NCSU-TOPS shall report all incidents of test security violations to the Chief Consultant for the Test Development Section or the Director of Accountability Services.

3.8 Electronic Formatting of Tests and Test Materials

All tests and test items (including archived tests and items and test historical data) generated for the North Carolina Testing Program shall be stored, managed, and maintained electronically using a database system that will facilitate being imported into other electronic media, as required, without additional individual user processing or formatting. Documents including tests and test items, to the extent possible, shall be created using a system that allows for management with database and web-based applications without additional formatting or processing. Tests along with all supporting graphics shall be stored as intact electronic files so that intact tests can be retrieved, if required. NCSU-TOPS shall make every effort to minimize the amount of paper used to support the statewide testing program by continuously exploring ways to make the testing operation operate more effectively and efficiently.

3.9 Archiving of Documents Noted as Public Records

Data files, documents, reports, tests, and other items generated pursuant to this contract are to be archived and maintained for the purpose of public record as set forth by the Records and Retention and Disposition Schedule and Retention Periods governing the records series listed in Chapters 121 and 132 of the General Statutes of North Carolina and the General Schedule for State Agency Records issued by the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources Office of Archives and History, Division of Historical Resources, Archives and Records Section, Government Records Branch dated January 10, 2004, the procedures set forth under N. C. Administrative Code, Title 7, Chapter 4, Subchapter M, Section 500, and the schedules set forth by the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services acting through their Records Officer(s). It shall be the responsibility of the NCDPI Project Manager to provide guidance to the project manager of the NCSU-TOPS in carrying out the responsibilities of records retention and disposition schedules set forth by North Carolina State Government as they are applicable to the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services. NCSU-TOPS shall be responsible for retaining a minimum of 5 copies of any and all documents generated. At the conclusion of the contractual relationship between the NCSU-TOPS and NCDPI, all archived data files, documents; reports, tests, and other items generated pursuant to this contract are to be provided to the NCDPI. Conclusion of the contractual relationship is when there is no contract in effect between NCSU-TOPS and the NCDPI.

3.10 Confidentiality of Student Records

Student educational records are subject to 20 U.S.C. 1232g. Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) are not disclosable except in very limited circumstances. NCSU-TOPS will ensure that every employee responsible for carrying out the terms of this contract is aware of the confidentiality requirements of federal law. In addition, each employee must sign a confidentiality acknowledgement that indicates that he or she understands the legal requirements for confidentiality. NCSU-TOPS is responsible for the actions of its employees and must take all precautions necessary to ensure that no violations occur. Finally, access to personally identifiable student education information will be limited to those employees who are required to have access in order to perform their responsibilities pursuant to this contract.

3.11 Copyrighting Test Materials

The staff at NCSU-TOPS shall be responsible for assisting the NCDPI staff in ensuring that all created tests and supporting materials are copyrighted timely and fully, including acquiring trademarks (if needed) for the actual names of the tests such as North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests, North Carolina End-of-Course Tests, *NCEXTENDI*, Grade 3 Reading Portfolio, NC Final Exams, and the College and Career Readiness Alternates for Grades 10 and 11. The state secure tests and field test forms and other secure documents are to be copyrighted in a timely manner following established guidelines of the Library of Congress.

3.12 Use of Copyrighted Materials

The test development staff and the copyright editor at NCSU-TOPS shall ensure the use of copyrighted materials is documented and that the appropriate copyright holder is identified and permission to use is sought before the materials are used. NCSU-TOPS staff must ensure that the appropriate documentation is filed with the NCDPI noting the NCDPI is the user of the copyrighted materials and that any fees charged are incurred by the NCDPI. In addition, NCSU-TOPS shall ensure that the use of copyrighted materials follows established guidelines, relative rates, and percentages used as opposed to public domain material and commissioned work. Content staff must be made fully aware of guidelines for use of copyrighted materials including the right to deny use if rates exceed an established reasonable amount.

3.13 Delivering Selected Tests Online

It shall be the expectation that tests designated by the department will be delivered online either as the sole mechanism for test delivery or as an option. NCSU-TOPS staff shall have the responsibility for providing the necessary programming and hosting services as well as technical support services to deliver online assessments.

NCSU-TOPS must use LEA/school supplied student registrations and sessions scheduled data to create participation forecasts to project online testing volume on any given day during the testing window. NCDPI must be able to view reports of the projected online testing volume at any time starting 45 days prior to and throughout the test administration window. All online delivery failures must be documented and provided to NCDPI daily during the testing window, and a summary report must be provided within 45 days of the last day of the testing window.

Section IV. Scope-of-Work

4.1 Test Development Services and Psychometric Technical Assistance and Support (60%):

4.1.1 Scope of Work

The function and tasks required of this work group are to engage in the activities and provide psychometric, statistical, and technical support necessary to develop the assessment instruments, both paper/pencil and online and general and alternative assessments, required to successfully deliver the North Carolina Testing Program. This work group is also responsible for the design and development of the NC Final Exams, assessments for the non-tested subjects used for teacher effectiveness measures. In addition, NCSU-TOPS is to assist in the design and implementation of a comprehensive assessment system to meet the needs of students including technical assistance and support for an on-going classroom based online assessment tool and test item bank (at both school/LEA level). This work unit must possess the professional and technical skills essential to effectively and efficiently oversee/manage and provide quality control measures that assure efficiency in the implementation of the test development operation performed by the measurement and scoring specialists to produce assessment instruments. This function is a major component of the contract scope-of-work and represents approximately 60 percent of the resources (personnel and budget) required to implement the work described in this project and necessary for the successful implementation of North Carolina's testing and accountability programs. A major responsibility of this group is to provide support in producing technically-sound, valid, and reliable tests that are grammatically correct and contain the correct answer keys that utilize current technology systems, Principles of Universal Design, and general assessment standards required by the USED Peer Review Process and Joint Committee Standards (APA and AERA).

The major tasks and activities currently identified for this component of the contract are listed and are described in detail below:

- 1) Assist NCDPI staff in coordinating the activities required to develop assessments by (1) developing and maintaining an online training system for item writing and reviewing, (2) recruiting item writers (teachers), developing item specifications, (3) writing and developing assessment items, (4) editing and revising existing tests, and test items, (5) coordinating advisory reviews, (6) inputting test items into testing program databases, (7) creating test items artwork as needed, and (8) developing and maintaining answer keys required for psychometric analyses. In addition to partnering with the Division of Accountability Services, the fulfillment of this work requires NCSU-TOPS to collaborate with and support the work of the NCDPI Curriculum and Instruction staff, the NCDPI Exceptional Children's staff, and the NCPI English as a Second Language staff.
- 2) Assist NCDPI staff with coordinating the activities required to conduct item tryouts and field tests as needed to maintain the appropriate number of assessment instruments (this may be an ongoing process as field test items are embedded in the operational tests each year). These activities include, but are not limited to (1) securing LEA participation, (2) assisting in the development of alternative field test models, (3) developing and producing field tests, (4) developing and producing answer sheets, (4) producing test administrator's manuals, (5) assisting with the production of LEA field test training materials, (6) coordinating the packaging, shipping, and return of field test materials, (7) receiving and checking completed field test answer documents, (9) and, scanning/scoring field test documents.
- 3) Assist NCDPI staff with analysis of field test data by generating/reviewing item statistics and developing reporting statistics.

- 4) Assist NCDPI staff with generating, modifying, verifying, and checking the NCDPI specific computer software code required to maintain the scanning/scoring/report producing program and other computer programs specific to the development component of the North Carolina Testing Program.
- 5) Analyze item data and obtain answer key verifications for all tests included in the North Carolina Testing Program to facilitate decisions regarding production of test forms.
- 6) Provide technical, professional, and clerical assistance to maintain test development item archives, item and test records, statistical references, and field test data. Assist with item production, which includes, but is not limited to inputting data from curriculum surveys into appropriate databases, preparing item records, editing and proof English language arts items and tests.
- 7) Provide professional, technical, and curricular consultation services in test development, scoring, and reporting of assessments.
- 8) Assist with providing technical and administrative support for performance assessment requests for proposals (RFPs) required to implement the performance testing component of the NC Testing Program.
- 9) Assist NCDPI staff by providing an electronic database for the item pool that is used to assemble North Carolina tests ensuring that the test item pool is compatible with online testing project requirements.
- 10) Assist NCDPI staff with actual test assembly of all tests included in the NC testing program including traditional, non-traditional, general, alternative, and alternate assessments.
- 11) Assist NCDPI staff in identifying and subcontracting with prospective item writing and item development vendors which shall to a great degree include North Carolina teachers.
- 12) Assist NCDPI in conducting the appropriate validation studies including data collection and analyses required to ensure technical soundness of North Carolina state developed tests.
- 13) Assist NCDPI in the annual production of test administration manuals for each component of the North Carolina Testing Program by editing the directions for administering the tests and ensuring their alignment with the test design as required.
- 14) Assist with the development of the design and creation of technical reports to provide technical information pertinent to the development of the mathematics, science, English language arts, and social studies tests.
- 15) Assist with a design of tests and test items to facilitate continuation of moving forward with administering designated tests online.
- 16) Support, maintain, and enhance the electronic system for generating, managing, storing, and archiving test items.
- 17) Assist NCDPI staff in the generation of test specifications and blueprints for each individual test to be developed.
- 18) Create and manage large scale online distributed scoring system for scoring constructed response items. This system includes a large scale imaging and data collection, rescoring for reliability analysis reporting, as well as post processing and final score inclusion. Conduct scoring via this system for ten

NCFE courses. Final scores delivered to NCDPI within extremely short time frames so that students can receive scores at the end of the instructional period.

4.1.2 Contractor Proposes Budget

NCSU-TOPS is to propose an operational budget for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 fiscal years for this component of the contractual agreement.

4.2 Technical Assistance and Support, Programming Services, Logistical Solutions, Test Production and Layout, Warehousing and Materials Delivery, Online Testing Delivery and Hosting, and Archiving of Documents (40%)

4.2.1 Scope of Work

The function and tasks required of this work group shall be to use a variety of sophisticated data collection and statistical analysis tools to ensure that all data collected and reported as part of the SBE's school-level accountability and testing programs are accounted for, appropriate, and correct. Extremely important decisions concerning the operation, organization, and performance of North Carolina's approximately 2,500 public schools will be based on these data. The group will select statistically appropriate student and/or school samples for field tests and for the administration of sampled tests. The staff shall also institute a system of quality control procedures to ensure the integrity and quality of the data. The group will carry-out data collection design, data audits, data checks, and will produce the State Testing Results (The Green Book) which shall include results from all state mandated assessments and alternate assessments.

The duties/work will include designing, defining, establishing, editing, and completing the data collection procedures essential to ensuring that test and related data shall be collected in an appropriate and correct manner with 100 percent accuracy. The staff shall work with the NCDPI staff in all of these endeavors as directed. The remaining time should be devoted to conducting data analysis and creating electronic tools for data analysis that result in statistically and psychometrically accurate and timely reports both in paper formats and as web-based tools. In summary, the purpose of this professional work group is to provide the work/services (e.g., quality control and data analysis) typically performed by an applied research group. This work group component of the contract represents approximately 8 percent of the total contract and must be staffed with experienced, technically trained statistical analysts, researchers, data analysts, quality control managers and statisticians. The major tasks and activities currently identified for this component of the contract are listed and described in detail below:

4.2.2 Use Statistical Software Packages to Conduct Data Analyses

NCSU-TOPS is to use SAS, and other commercially available sophisticated statistical software packages and computer programs, online software program editors, and graphing packages to prepare special, in-depth analysis related to school-level accountability efforts for end-of-grade (EOG), end-of-course (EOC), alternate assessments, field tests, special studies, and other test data per the direction of the NCDPI Accountability Services/Test Development staff. NCSU-TOPS must analyze testing and accountability data and/or data gathering models as necessary to ensure that appropriate statistical procedures are being applied to the generation, collection, and combining of the testing and accountability data. As part of the analysis process, NCSU-TOPS must verify data files submitted to the NCDPI and from other divisions and agencies for data accuracy, integrity, and correctness. NCSU-TOPS is expected to upgrade the statistical software as required to ensure efficiency and compatibility. The NCSU-TOPS project manager is to inform the NCDPI project manager any time that NCSU-TOPS decides to upgrade the statistical software packages since compatibility between the two organizations is critical for the efficiency and success of the program operation.

4.2.3 Assist with the Processing of LEA Data

NCSU-TOPS is to assist as is appropriate and as directed with the processing of test data files received from 115 LEAs and/or their public schools and public charter schools by serving as a quality control check to ensure accuracy of the data from the paper and pencil and online assessments. NCSU-TOPS is to consolidate LEA and/or school-level data files using specially developed NCDPI/NCSU-TOPS programs to produce NCDPI state-level files for the State's accountability programs. To verify accuracy of aggregating processes, NCSU-TOPS will merge programs by instituting appropriate quality control procedures.

NCSU-TOPS will produce special analysis on policy issues emerging from State testing programs (e.g., end-of-grade, end-of-course, and alternates), State accountability programs, and other SBE requests as required.

Specifically, NCSU-TOPS shall:

- 1) assist by supporting tasks and activities, as required, to facilitate the design and redesign of tests to be administered online,
- 2) ensure data collected online for the tests undergo a quality assurance procedure before data are exported for processing and analysis,
- 3) all data output and reports generated by the terms of this contract are not to be reported or disseminated until approved by the project manager from NCDPI,
- 4) Facilitate secure data collection and analysis processing by providing technical support services to staff and to NCDPI, including but not limited to
 - a. VPN connected services;
 - b. SSH hosting capacity used to transfer LEA data;
 - c. SAS services to run ad-hoc and pre-programmed analysis with an emphasis on tighter business process integration;
 - d. End-user technical support through help desk type operations; and,
 - e. Data storage and database services.

4.2.4 Contractor Proposes Budget for Analysis Group

NCSU-TOPS is to propose an operational budget for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 fiscal years for this component of the contractual agreement.

4.3 Research Design and Studies, Data Collection and Processing, Statistical Analyses, Report Generation, and Evaluation Support (8%)

4.3.1 Scope of Work

This work group shall be responsible for (1) the efficient and timely layout, mock-up and production of all tests and supporting test materials, (2) the printing, checking and storage of tests and test materials, and (3) the receiving, handling (pick/pack), shipment and return of test materials to and from the school systems. In addition to the regular shipping and handling of the State-required tests, this unit shall design and institute an electronic system to take orders for the State testing program and support a similar warehousing operation for the non-public or private schools or other state educational institutions such as the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Federal Schools, and the Department of Community Colleges interested in the procurement of North Carolina's tests. This work unit will need to be able to receive and process orders for the various test materials on a daily basis and be able to ship the requested test materials in a timely

manner to the appropriate LEAs and schools utilizing warehousing facilities based on the warehousing needs of the North Carolina Testing Program as identified from operational data for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

The personnel employed to staff the technical, maintenance, support and programming component of this work group must possess a variety of highly technical computer skills and computer related skills, must be able to solve a diverse number and type of computer hardware and software problems, some of which are typical along with problems which are unique to this testing program and test scoring operation.

- 1) Assist NCDPI staff with the development and production of final versions of assessment instruments. Such activities include, but are not limited to, developing answer sheet as approved and test book layouts, production of final PDF for printing, and edit/quality-control check all final test document production activities and products, including web-based assessment data collection projects.
- 2) Assist NCDPI staff with overseeing the printing and production of testing and accountability test materials. Such activities include, but are not limited to, quality-control checking proofs for test books, answer sheets, and administrator's manuals, and overseeing/monitoring the printing contractor's printing operations and receiving/inventorying printed test materials.
- 3) Provide printing services for (1) large-print and one-item per page test materials for EOGs, EOCs, North Carolina Final Exams, Grade 3 Reading Portfolio and NCEXTEND1 and (2) accommodations monitoring forms for all assessments.
- 4) Manage and operate test materials receiving, order fulfillment, and delivery warehousing facility. Such activities include, but are not limited to: receiving/logging-in test material shipments from the printing contractor and related vendors, receiving/processing material orders, operating a pick/pack materials distribution center, packaging materials for shipment, maintaining a materials inventory system, managing the delivery of the test materials to the appropriate customers (e.g., LEAs).
- 5) Improve the overall cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the tracking procedures for test materials handling/shipping by implementing a test materials receiving, pick/pack, and distribution operation located at a central North Carolina site utilizing the most current technology.
- 6) Streamline and improve test materials handling procedures including receiving and inventorying test books, answer documents, and related testing program printed materials/data files. Prepackage and/or package testing program and test utilization materials for LEAs and special schools and school systems and other NCDPI customers. Prepare packing lists and related material shipping documents from information provided by LEAs through the online ordering system. Package and ship LEA test materials according to packing lists and testing program specifications.
- 7) Design and maintain an online ordering system for LEAs to order test materials for each testing cycle (fall, spring, and summer). The ordering system must provide LEAs with a projected membership for each grade or test population as necessary to achieve order quantities. Work to integrate membership data from LEAs into the order system with the goal of reducing manually entered orders.
- 8) Assist NCDPI staff in defining the specifications for shipping cartons, pallet layout and materials package for efficient storage and shipping.
- 9) Assist in writing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) as required and evaluating subsequent proposals when further outsourcing of services is required.

- 10) Assist in the development of specifications, acquisition, and maintenance of the hardware and software necessary for the support of the internal/external systems including the computer-based systems required for the implementation of the North Carolina Testing Program
- 11) Provide technical support for the design of the divisional web site(s) and to provide for the upload of files to the web site as requested.
- 12) Develop, maintain, and enhance as needed, the Testing News Network (TNN) to provide an electronic medium for the dissemination of secure testing information, test files, and other secure documents and applications to LEA test coordinators and their superintendents.
- 13) Maintain and continue to explore additional ways to improve the tracking system for managing the warehouse inventory of test materials.
- 14) Create and oversee Beta testing and quality control processes as required for any technology based assessments.
- 15) Assist with the programming needs of the statewide testing and accountability programs.
- 16) Assist the NCDPI with the online test design, item formatting, and programming.
- 17) Assist with the online delivery of the alternate assessments and prediction of number of participants.
- 18) Host the technological delivery of online test administrations and data collection projects such as EOC online, NCEXTEND1, NC Final Exams scoring and other projects as needed.
- 19) Maintain a system for electronic archiving of all documents designated as public record for purpose of retention and access.
- 20) Continue to explore ways to reduce the footprints and bandwidth needs of the design of each of the online testing projects.
- 21) Provide the NCDPI and the public a high level of assurance that test security is maintained continuously for all testing projects and in particular for web-based delivered testing projects ensuring that the security and confidentiality of web delivered test items and subsequent student records cannot be easily compromised.
- 22) Assist the NCDPI accountability with application reengineering, development, testing, hosting, and deployment for the redesign of the Accountability application suite including ABCTools, Winscan, Individual Report, Accountability Database, etc.

4.3.2 Contractor Proposes a Budget

NCSU-TOPS is to propose an operational budget for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 fiscal years for this component of the contractual agreement. 4.3 Research design and studies, Data Collection and Processing, Statistical Analyses, Report Generation, and Evaluation Support (8%);

4.4.1 Scope of Work Summary

The NCDPI has made every attempt to describe in detail the total scope-of-work required to be performed under this contract; however, the very nature of defining and implementing a statewide testing and accountability model/program requires adjustments to the scope-of-work from time to time. Therefore, the NCDPI reserves the right to redefine, to assume the responsibility of the tasks, and/or to add to the tasks which must be performed to successfully support the implementation of the North Carolina Testing Program as per contract negotiations specifications contained in the “Terms and Conditions” of the Contract Agreement permit. In addition, the NCDPI project coordinator will work with the NCSU-TOPS contract manager to produce budget tracking and monitoring methodology that will yield per test costs to be consistent with the practices mandated at the NCDPI in order to project budgetary expenditures and requirements by test.

5.0 Timeline

All activities shall be completed according to the timelines established by the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services staff and conveyed to the contract project coordinator named in NCSU-TOPS’s proposal prior to the execution of the contract Agreement. The NCDPI reserves the right to modify the products and services delivery timelines as needed to carry out the directives of the SBE and the General Assembly. Such revisions in project schedules shall be mutually agreed to by and between the Division of Accountability Services staff and NCSU-TOPS’s project coordinator prior to inclusion in the project’s timeline specifications and such modifications shall be subject to the provisions contained in the “Terms and Conditions” section of the Contract Agreement.

All activities to be completed under this Contract Agreement shall be completed on or before June 30, 2016.

6.0 Program Monitoring and Progress Report Meetings

6.1 Assignment of NCSU-TOPS Project Manager

NCSU-TOPS will designate one staff person to work closely with the NCDPI coordinator for this project. All questions and correspondence concerning the project should be between these respective representatives in order to ensure effective coordination and communication between NCSU-TOPS and the NCDPI. Also, because of the differences in tasks, NCSU-TOPS should designate Project Directors for each of the major project components: Editing, Production, Test Development, Statistical Analysis/Reporting, and Warehouse. The NCDPI project coordinator is also accountable to other divisions of the NCDPI (Administrative Services, Contractual Services, etc.) for this project and will have full sign-off authority. The NCDPI requests that their coordinator be authorized to work directly with NCSU-TOPS's department directors and managers in order to expedite the sign-off of all project work.

Because of the dynamic and evolving nature of the testing and accountability programs, the coordinators must be authorized to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities to provide the best possible product and services for North Carolina’s public schools. Such revisions will be incorporated into the project if both coordinators agree in writing to the changes and if such modifications can be accomplished with available resources. A final accounting of all program modifications will be prepared before and presented at the final progress report meeting.

NCSU-TOPS should anticipate at least quarterly progress meetings. For planning purposes, the initial meeting will occur immediately after the contract is awarded. The parties will meet quarterly or as frequently as is necessary for progress reporting and resource allocation monitoring. At the final session the entire project will be critiqued and suggestions for improvement made.

7.0 Payment Schedule

NCSU-TOPS shall invoice the NCDPI monthly, according to the provisions set forth in the “Terms and Conditions” section of the Contract Agreement. Any unused funds will revert to the NCDPI.

8.0 Proposal Evaluation Criteria

The following five evaluation criteria will be used to determine the responsiveness of NCSU-TOPS’s proposal to the RFP and are arranged in descending order of importance to the NCDPI.

8.1 Quality Control Procedures

Due to the detailed nature of the RFP, the NCDPI will focus on contractor detail on those procedures that ensure the products and services described are delivered without error or need for NCDPI staff time to resolve problems. NCSU-TOPS should emphasize those measures that are beyond normal industry standards. Such measures should include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) key checks of all camera-ready copies of tests, (2) verification of all items on the camera-ready copy with the item record, (3) verification of the camera-ready copy with the digital proof from the printer, (4) check-in process of 20% of the shipments from the printer to verify the product has been printed with the correct number of pages and with pages collated in the correct order, and (5) verification of the accuracy of shipments to LEAs by a person other than the person who packed the order.

NCSU-TOPS must ensure day-to-day security to prohibit unauthorized personnel access to North Carolina Testing Program test materials through deliberate or unintentional actions. Security also refers to and includes oral communication by staff of the particular day-to-day operations and content of test materials to the general public. NCSU-TOPS is held responsible for the actions of the staff and must guard against a breach of security. Staff must be carefully screened and made to understand the importance of security. In addition, each staff must sign a non-disclosure document attesting to their understanding of the expected behavior in not discussing or revealing the contents of the tests and the results from the tests. NCSU-TOPS is responsible for creating the non-disclosure document but must ensure that it meets the NCDPI standards and specifications. The facility should be structured in a manner that prohibits the general public access to secure test materials.

8.2 Contractor's Competence

The NCDPI will thoroughly review: (a) the qualifications of the prospective contractor's personnel assigned to this project, (b) experience with the tasks for which each person will be responsible, and (c) the estimated time each will be involved in the project.

8.3 Feasibility and Cost Effectiveness of Contractor's Plan

The methods proposed to accomplish each task will be reviewed for specificity, feasibility, schedule, plans for scoring, and plans for data entry, cost/benefit, and consistency with NCDPI defined scope-of-work and program objectives.

8.4 Overall Cost

The cost associated with carrying out the terms of this contract shall be categorized according to the three components of the contract. Cost related to personnel shall be specified. The overhead costs related to the execution of this contract shall not exceed 10 percent of the total contract costs.

8.5 Fulfillment of RFP Requirements

NCSU-TOPS is expected to comply with all requirements of the RFP within the given time frame. Previous experience with similar tasks will be considered.

8.6 Delivery of Service on Time

Proposals should include a description of any previous similar work performed by the prospective contractor. The NCDPI may contact agencies that have worked or are working with the prospective contractor.

9.0 Contract Information

Three copies of NCSU-TOPS's response to this RFP must be delivered on or before 2:00 p.m. EST, Wednesday May 23, 2014, to Dr. Tammy Howard, Director of Accountability Services, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, NC Education Building, 301 N. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2825.

NCSU-TOPS will need to include in its proposal a description of the proposed organization/personnel proposed to accomplish the project tasks. Pages of the proposal must be numbered and the document clearly labeled on the outside, "Proposal: Technical and Coordination Support for the North Carolina Testing and Accountability Programs." Questions concerning this RFP should be addressed to Tammy Howard, Division of Accountability Services, NCDPI, 6314 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699- 6314, and must be received by 1:00 p.m. Friday, May 10, 2014, so that the potential contractor can receive a written copy of questions and answers to questions prior to the deadline for proposals. Because this is a contract between a state agency and the State University system, a task order agreement must be processed in order to fully implement this contract.

The State of North Carolina requires that any contract between state agencies meet certain general terms and conditions. The terms and conditions as they relate to this project between the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and NCSU-TOPS are listed below:

9.1 Contract Terms and Conditions

- 1) **Contract Residency.** It is agreed between the parties hereto that the place of this contract, its situs and forum, will be Wake County, North Carolina, and in said county and state will all matters, whether sounding in contract or tort relating to the validity, construction, interpretation and enforcement of this contract, be determined. North Carolina law will govern the interpretation and construction of this contract.
- 2) **Project Coordinator.** The Project Coordinator shall be responsible for ensuring Contractor conformance with the terms, conditions, performance specifications as set forth in this contract, and an evaluation of NCSU-TOPS's performance. NCSBE has complete discretion in replacing the Project Coordinator with another person of its own choosing.
- 3) **Right of Termination.** NCSBE may terminate this agreement at any time at its complete discretion by thirty days written notice from NCSBE to NCSU-TOPS. In that event, all finished or unfinished documents and other materials shall, at the option of NCSBE, become its property. If the contract is terminated by NCSBE, as provided herein, NCSU-TOPS will be paid in an amount which bears the same ratio to the total compensation as does the service actually performed to the total service set forth in this agreement.
- 4) **Method of Payment.** NCSU-TOPS will submit an invoice or invoices according to the payment schedule set forth in this agreement. Invoices should be billed to the Payables Section, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, but directed to the Project Coordinator, as identified herein, for approval of payment. Payment will be made within fifteen days upon receipt by the Payables Section of a requisition for payment

from the Project Coordinator confirming that NCSU-TOPS has satisfactorily completed the work required under this contract and evidenced by said invoices.

- 5) **Contract Funding.** It is understood and agreed between NCSU-TOPS and NCSBE that the payment of compensation specified in this agreement, its continuation or any renewal or extension thereof, is dependent upon and subject to the appropriation of funds to, and allocation by, NCSBE for the purpose set forth in this contract. Should such funds not be appropriated or allocated, this contract shall immediately be terminated. NCSBE shall not be liable to Contractor for damages of any kind (general, special or consequential) as a result of such termination.
- 6) **Contract Transfer.** NCSU-TOPS shall not transfer any interest in this agreement without prior written agreement from NCSBE.
- 7) **Contract Personnel.** NCSU-TOPS agrees that it has, or will secure at its own expense, all personnel required to perform the services set forth in this agreement. NCSU-TOPS shall not hire, employ or contract with any person currently employed by NCSBE to furnish any material or perform any service on this contract without first assuring compliance with applicable laws of the State of North Carolina and regulations of the State Personnel Commission relating to dual or secondary employment by State employees. In the event NCSU-TOPS hires, employs or contracts with any employee of the NCSBE, that fact will be immediately reported in writing, referencing the contract number, to the Purchasing Section, Department of Public Instruction.
- 8) **Key Personnel.** NCSU-TOPS shall not substitute for key personnel assigned to the performance of this contract without prior written approval from the NCSBE Project Coordinator. Key personnel are defined as those individuals named, either by title or by individual name, in NCSU-TOPS's offer.
- 9) **Subcontractor Approval.** None of the work to be performed under this contract by NCSU-TOPS or its employees shall be subcontracted without the prior written approval of NCSBE Project Coordinator, unless such arrangement was specified in its offer.
- 10) **Contract Audit.** NCSU-TOPS agrees that NCSBE has the right to audit the records of NCSU-TOPS pertaining to this contract both during the period of this contract and for three years after completion hereof. Contractor agrees to maintain all pertinent documents and records relating to this contract for said period of time following completion of the contract period.
- 11) **Contract Modifications.** This contract may be amended only by written amendments duly executed by and between NCSBE and NCSU-TOPS. However, to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities the NCSBE Project Coordinator may make minor modifications that (a) do not change the intent of the contract or the scope of NCSU-TOPS's performance; (b) do not increase NCSU-TOPS's total compensation or method of payment; and (c) either improve the overall quality of the product or service to the State without increasing the cost, or reduce the total cost of the product or service without reducing the quantity or quality. All such minor modifications to the contract must be recorded in writing and signed by NCSU-TOPS, Project Coordinator and placed on file with the Purchasing Section, NCSBE.
- 12) **Termination for Cause.** If, through any cause, NCSU-TOPS fails to fulfill in a timely and proper manner the obligations under this contract, NCSBE will thereupon have the right to terminate this contract by giving written notice to NCSU-TOPS of such termination and by specifying the effective date thereof, at least ten (10) days before the effective date of such termination. In such event, NCSU-TOPS will receive just and equitable compensation for any satisfactorily completed work. Notwithstanding, NCSU-TOPS shall not be relieved of liability to NCSBE for damages sustained by NCSBE by virtue of any breach of this contract or failure to perform, and NCSBE may withhold payment to NCSU-TOPS for the purpose of set-off until such time as the exact amount of damages due NCSBE from such breach or failure can be determined.

- 13) Contractor Bankruptcy. The filing of a petition of bankruptcy or insolvency by or against NCSU-TOPS will terminate this contract.
- 14) Ownership of Contract Products. NCSU-TOPS agrees that all products, records and data tapes produced under this contract become the property of NCSBE.
- 15) Indemnification. State Agency - The State Agency's liability for bodily injury and property damage is established by the North Carolina Tort Claims Act (NC General Statute Sec. 143-291 through 143-300.1), and such act constitutes the limits of responsibility of NCSU-TOPS under this agreement concerning personal and bodily injury and property damage.
- 16) Contractor Project Coordinator. NCSU-TOPS must designate one person employed at the executive level, preferably a vice-president or the president, who has the authority to expedite work or make adjustments in scheduling. This person will be contacted by NCSBE Project Coordinator to make such adjustments only in the case of an emergency.
- 17) Severability. No condition in this document shall be construed to limit the enforceability of any other condition herein. In the event any term or condition contained in, or made a part of this document by reference, is negated or vacated for any reason whatsoever all other provisions shall remain fully valid and enforceable.
- 18) Payment Schedule: NCSU-TOPS shall submit to the NCDPI Project Coordinator an invoice requesting payments under this contract on a monthly schedule. NCSU-TOPS must submit a final invoice to the NCDPI Project Coordinator on or before the contract ending date for payment of all contract products and services to the NCDPI that are to be rendered under this Agreement.